X-23: DEADLY REGENESIS

MARVEL

5

SCHULTZ
SALAZAR
LOPEZ

Cloned from the mutant Logan, A.K.A. Wolverine, Laura Kinney was made to be the perfect weapon. With adamantium-coated claws on both hands and feet, a healing factor and heightened senses, as X-23, she more than lived up to that promise. Becoming one of the world's most sought-after assassins while still only a teenager, X-23 has been forced to kill by numerous organizations. After escaping that life, Laura joined the X-Men, eventually joining them on Utopia, the island sanctuary established as a haven for mutantkind. Seeking to understand her place in the world, X-23 has struck out on her own, hoping to find the humanity that was so long denied to her…

X-23 DEADLY REGENESIS

PREVIOUSLY...

Laura has been captured by her old handler, Kimura. At the behest of her employer, Kimura has forced Laura to act as an assassin once again, holding her own drug-dependent workers hostage for X-23's compliance. Laura has managed to avoid killing any of her targets, to the surprise of Kimura's other muscle, Jordan Gastin, A.K.A. Haymaker, whose brother was murdered by Laura years ago when Kingpin used her to take out a rival operation.

Displeased with Laura's newfound reluctance to kill, Kimura shot one of her guards, revealing her true nature to Jordan. Meanwhile, Kimura's mysterious boss has just arrived: none other than the Kingpin himself…

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story takes place prior to *X-23 (2010) #4.*

THE PAST HAUNTS US ALL PART 5

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I HAVE HELD BACK MY RAGE TO PROVE TO MYSELF THAT I ALONE CONTROL MY ACTIONS...

...BUT *KINGPIN'S* PRESENCE NEGATES *EVERYTHING.*

WHEN I WAS BOUGHT AND SOLD BY THE FACILITY, *HE* WAS THEIR *BEST* CUSTOMER.

I WAS HIS PAWN.

AND NOW I CAN UNLEASH *ALL* THE ANGER I HAVE KEPT CAGED UP.

IT IS ALMOST HUMOROUS TO THINK YOU HAVE A CHANCE OF HARMING ME.

THESE GUARDS CANNOT SAVE HIM FROM ME...

...OR JORDAN.

WHAM

THEIR RAGE IS JUST AS VALID.

SLASH

I WILL NOT KILL THESE SOLDIERS, BUT I WILL *NOT* SHOW THEM MERCY.

THUNK

SLICE

WELL, *THIS* IS A @%$#SHOW!

LOOKS LIKE I HAVE TO DO *EVERYTHING* MYSELF.

I CAN END THIS.

I WILL END THIS!

BUT KIMURA'S BULLETS HURT ENOUGH TO STOP ME.

BLAM BLAM BLAM

DESPITE THE INHIBITOR SPRAY WEARING OFF, I STILL CANNOT FULLY HEAL QUICKLY ENOUGH BEFORE--

X!

WHUD

THEY HAVE MORE COMPASSION THAN I GAVE THEM CREDIT FOR.

AFTER ALL I HAVE DONE TO THEM-- *TAKEN* FROM THEM-- JORDAN STILL HAS A CONSCIENCE.

PLOT TWIST!

DIDN'T HAVE JORDAN *HELPING* X-23 ON MY BINGO CARD.

YOU OKAY?

A NOBLE EFFORT, MY DEAR, BUT FUTILE, I'M AFRAID.

SHE GOT CLOSER THAN *ANYONE ELSE*, I'M SURE.

YOU *MADE* HER KILL MY BROTHER DREW. YOU REMEMBER THAT?

IT'S WHEN YOU HAD HER KILL *FRANKIE FEAR.*

YOU MUST HAVE ME MISTAKEN FOR SOME COMMON STREET THUG WHO *RELISHES* EVERY MOMENT OF VIOLENCE.

I *BARELY* HAVE A RECOLLECTION OF FRANKIE FEAR...

...LET ALONE SOME LOW-LEVEL *CORNER BOY.*

I AM A *BUSINESSMAN*, AND VIOLENCE IS JUST THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS.

I CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD AND EVEN *THROUGH* THE CARRION.

IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO PROGRESS.

YOU, HOWEVER, REMEMBER *EVERY* KILL, CORRECT?

I WOULD RELISH KILLING *HIM.*

KIMURA, WE HAVE A PROBLEM.

I DON'T LIKE PROBLEMS, BURNHAM. WHAT IS IT?

SEEMS LIKE X-23 DIDN'T *FULLY COMPLETE* HER MISSION EARLIER TONIGHT.

EXPLAIN...

HER TARGET'S ON THE NEWS RIGHT NOW!

--IT'S PEOPLE LIKE KINGPIN AND OTHER CRIMINALS THAT NEED TO BE WIPED OUT--

THIS IS *UNACCEPTABLE*, KIMURA. YOU GAVE ME A *GUARANTEE!*

YOU MAY HAVE *THOUGHT* YOU HAD FREE REIN OF THIS FACILITY, BUT I CAN SEE MY INSPECTION SHOULD HAVE COME EARLIER.

HEY, I GAVE AN ORDER. IT'S NOT MY FAULT X-23 DIDN'T COMPLY.

YOU SAID YOU HAD HER UNDER *TOTAL CONTROL.*

ARE YOU HEALING AT ALL?

SOME... BUT NOT FAST ENOUGH.

I NEED ‡GNNF‡ MORE TIME.

I INDULGED YOU *LONG ENOUGH*, KIMURA. YOUR SIDE PROJECTS ARE NO LONGER FRUITFUL.

AND *THESE TWO* ARE NO LONGER OF VALUE TO ME.

I'M STILL GETTIN' *PAID*, RIGHT?

TEST THE MGH SAMPLE X-23 TOOK FROM HER LAST MISSION TO MAKE SURE IT'S PURE.

IF IT IS, THEN KILL HER AND THE OTHER ONE.

I SAID, I STILL GET MY MON--

WITH THAT NEW STRAIN'S POTENCY, WE WILL BE ABLE TO CREATE A NEW ASSASSIN... ONE MUCH EASIER TO *CONTROL.*

MAKE YOURSELF *USEFUL*, KIMURA, AND LOCK THEM UP.

THEN I GET MY CUT, RIGHT?

WE'LL SEE...

MOVE IT, YOU TWO.

I AM NOT COMPLETELY HELPLESS. I CAN FEEL *SOME* STRENGTH RETURNING.

BUT MOSTLY, I FEEL MY ANGER RISING-- BLUNTING THE PAIN--

--UNTIL I *SNAP!*

GET AWAY FROM ME!

HEY!

YOU ARE *NOT* MY FRIEND. DO NOT ACT AS IF YOU ARE.

WE WERE *NEVER* ON THE SAME TEAM.

PERHAPS MY GAMBIT WAS TOO SUBTLE?

YOU'RE RIGHT. WE'RE NOT FRIENDS.

HEY... CUT IT OUT.

BREAK IT UP, YOU TWO!

ARE YOU READY?

ARE *YOU?*

KRAK

WHAM

WHUMP

WE NEED--

KCH

SNIKT

SNIKT

SAY AGAIN?

THAT OUGHTA DO IT.

TAKE THE RADIO. THEN SEE TO THE PILL WORKERS. GET THEM TO SAFETY.

I WILL GO AFTER KINGPIN AND KIMURA.

KINGPIN IS *MINE!*

THERE IS ENOUGH OF HIM FOR *BOTH* OF US.

RIGHT NOW, THE *OTHERS* NEED YOUR HELP.

STAY IN CONTACT.

*HMM...*THE INHIBITOR SPRAY. THIS MAY COME IN HANDY.

%$#@...

HEY, BIG BOSS...I'LL BE TAKING MY CUT...

...NOW.

HAHA!

THIS TRANSACTION IS OFFICIALLY *VOIDED.*

YOU GET *NOTHING,* KIMURA.

I SUGGEST YOU GATHER WHAT YOU CAN...

...AND CRAWL BACK TO WHATEVER HOLE YOU CAME OUT OF.

GET THE CHOPPER PREPPED.

BURNHAM, YOU'RE WITH ME.

BUT--

THAT'S NOT A *REQUEST!*

VWEEP VWEEP VWEEP

WHUMP

THWAK

KERASH

WE'RE FUELED UP, RIGHT?

ALL SET.

GOOD, LET'S GO.

YOU'RE *FREE* NOW! GET OUT OF HERE!

WHUD

MOVE YOUR ASS, BURNHAM!

WE CAN'T. WE'RE GONNA *DIE* IF WE DON'T GET OUR DOSE.

SNIKT

I WOULD RUN.

SNIKT

...

WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT. JUST GET OUT OF HERE, AND MEET UP AT THE FRONT GATE.

I'LL MAKE SURE YOU'RE SAFE.

COMING...

MR. BURNHAM...

...I MAY HAVE SOME USE FOR YOU YET.

WHAT'D YOU HAVE IN MIND, MR. FISK?

WELL, ISN'T THIS A #@$%!&# SURPRISE.

I WAS TRAINED TO KILL BY THE FACILITY--

--BY KIMURA HERSELF.

THAT WILL BE HER UNDOING.

YOU WILL NOT LEAVE THIS PLACE *ALIVE*, KIMURA.

WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.

BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM

KLK

@#$%.

GAH!

FSSSST

:KOFF KOFF:

YOU DUMB %$#@! NOW WE'RE *BOTH* POWERLESS.

I DO NOT NEED MY POWERS TO BEAT YOU.

RAWR!

KIMURA TREATED ME LIKE AN ANIMAL...

WHAM

...WORSE THAN AN ANIMAL...

...SO I WILL BEHAVE AS ONE.

KRAK

I DO NOT NEED MY CLAWS TO PUNISH HER.

SNAP

SHE IS NOT IMMUNE TO MY RAGE.

÷PANT÷ NICE...÷KOFF÷ WORK THERE, X...

"...I TRAINED YOU WELL."

BUT CAN YOU *FINISH* THE JOB?

I CAN GIVE HER WHAT SHE WANTS...

...I HAVE *SO MANY* TIMES BEFORE.

X...YOU THERE? X-23, COME IN.

BUT SHE DOES NOT WIN TODAY.

I AM HERE.

KINGPIN'S ON HIS WAY TO THE ROOF.

I WILL INTERCEPT HIM.

THAT'S MY %$#@%#$ CHOPPER!

"REMEMBER TO LEAVE SOME OF HIM FOR ME, X."

IT WOULD BE EASIER TO KILL THESE GUARDS.

THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO KIMURA AND KINGPIN JUSTIFIES IT...

...IT GIVES ME THE "MORAL HIGH GROUND," AS CYCLOPS WOULD SAY...

...BUT *NO ONE* COMES BACK FROM DEATH...

...AND I AM NOT THEIR JUDGE, JURY OR EXECUTIONER.

WHAM

THE KINGPIN DID NOT *START* THE PROGRAM THAT CREATED ME...

YOU ARE ALREADY *PROVING USEFUL*, MR. BURNHAM.

THANK YOU, SIR.

...BUT HE *BENEFITED* FROM IT.

NOW I WILL BENEFIT FROM HIS DEATH.

I MUST DO WHAT OTHERS CANNOT.

I MUST STOP KINGPIN *AT ALL COSTS.*

I...

X, NO!

...I MAY HAVE MISCALCULATED THAT.

I'M COMIN', X!

THIS...

...IS GOING TO...

...HURT.

BOOM

I HAVE SURVIVED MANY FALLS...

ŧKOFF KOFFŧ X?

YOU OKAY, X-23?

...MANY INJURIES AT KIMURA'S HAND AND OTHERS...

ŧWHEEZEŧ ŧKOFFŧ

...BUT THIS HURTS MOST BECAUSE OF MY *PRIDE.*

OH, MAN, YOU'RE REALLY JACKED UP.

GNAWRL...

I'M HERE TO HELP, NOT FIGHT.

I WANTED TO TAKE KINGPIN'S LIFE...

...TO GET RID OF *ALL* THE HURT HE MADE ME INFLICT ON OTHERS...

WHUMP

...BUT I HAVE *MY OWN* HURTING TO STOP FIRST.

YOU'RE GONNA HEAL... YOU'RE GONNA BE FINE, X...

...TENK YOUU...

MERCY MEDICAL CENTER.
THIRTY-SIX HOURS LATER.

ONCE THE INHIBITOR SPRAY COMPLETELY WORE OFF, I WAS ABLE TO PUT MYSELF BACK TOGETHER QUICKLY.

LOGAN'S S.H.I.E.L.D. CONTACTS INTERCEPTED A CODED TRANSMISSION FROM BURNHAM ABOUT THE KINGPIN'S ACTIVITIES.

HE ALSO TRANSFERRED ALL THE MEDICAL RECORDS FOR KIMURA'S WORKERS SO THEY COULD RECEIVE PROPER TREATMENT FOR THEIR ADDICTION.

NOW THAT HE IS *EMBEDDED* IN KINGPIN'S ORGANIZATION, BURNHAM WILL BE AN ASSET GOING FORWARD.

KIMURA WAS MISSING WHEN S.H.I.E.L.D. SWEPT THE BUILDING.

I MAY *REGRET* NOT KILLING HER...

...BUT NOT TODAY.

HEY, X.

PLEASE CALL ME LAURA.

X IS WHAT KIMURA CALLED ME.

IT'S PRETTY AMAZING WHAT YOU DID FOR EVERYONE...AND FOR *ME*.

I AM GLAD TO HELP. I HAVE MUCH TO MAKE UP FOR.

I'D SAY YOU'RE ALREADY ON YOUR WAY.

THE COUNSELORS AT THE MGH CLINIC ARE OPTIMISTIC WE CAN ALL GET CLEAN AND GET OUR LIVES BACK.

THAT IS WELCOMED NEWS.

JUST WISH DREW WAS HERE TO SEE ME MAKE A COMEBACK.

EMERGENCY

COME... THERE IS SOMEPLACE I WOULD LIKE TO SHOW YOU.

HI, I'M EMILY... SHE/HER.

WELCOME TO *SURVIVORS.*

WE KNOW WE CAN'T ***BRING BACK*** OUR LOVED ONES, BUT WE ***CAN*** HONOR THEM AND HEAL FROM THE WOUNDS LEFT BEHIND.

MY PHYSICAL WOUNDS HEAL WITHOUT A MARK...

WHO WOULD LIKE TO START?

...BUT THERE ARE STILL SCARS BENEATH THE SURFACE.

OOF

OKAY...

I MUST EMBRACE THE SCARS AND LEARN FROM THEM...

HI... I'M JORDAN. THEY/THEM.

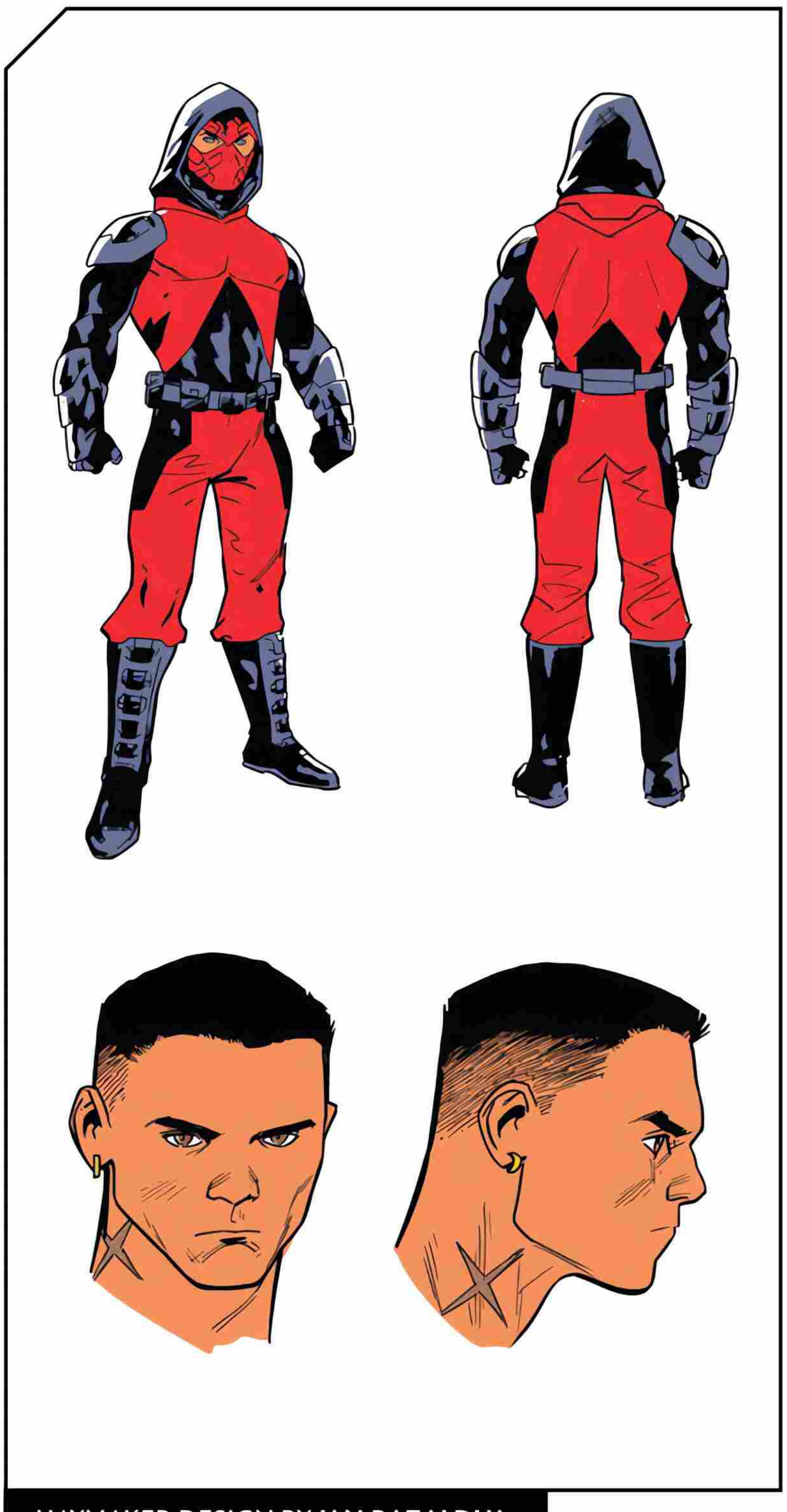
I...*UH*... I LOST MY BROTHER, DREW.

...I MUST DO WHAT OTHERS CANNOT.

I TOO... MUST ***HEAL.***

THANKS for joining us on this trip back to Laura Kinney's pre-Wolverine days as X-23 for a glimpse into untold adventures from a formative period in her character history. Erica, Edgar, Carlos, Cory, Kalman and the whole team put their all into creating something that fits within continuity, while bringing fresh ideas--and new supporting cast--to the legend of Laura.

Jordan Gastin, A.K.A. Haymaker, was a big part of that story. This adversary-turned-ally became a central figure in Laura's own journey. Check below for a glimpse of Jan Bazaldua's original design for the character!



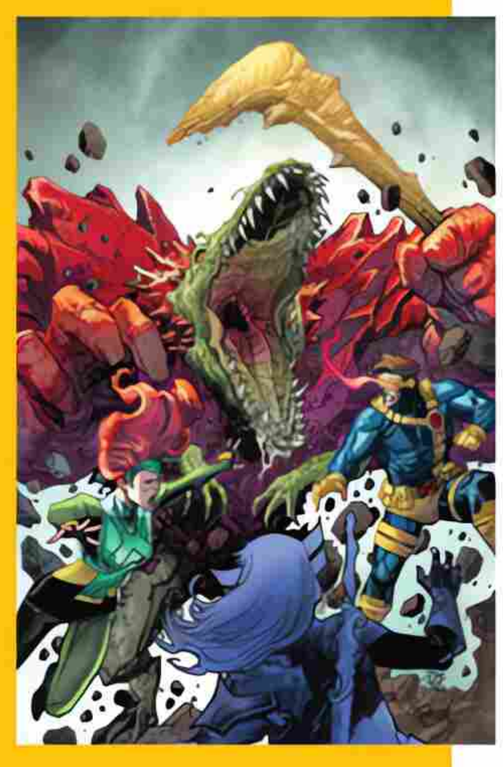
HAYMAKER DESIGN BY **JAN BAZALDUA**

WHAT'S NEXT?

Well, eagle-eyed readers will note this series slots specifically in the window when Laura left Utopia, and before we pick her up on the road in **X-23 (2010) #4**. To read that story, check out **X-23 Omnibus Vol. 1 Hardcover**.

And where is she ***now***? Laura A.K.A. Wolverine can be found in the pages of the current ongoing **X-FORCE** title, where she lends her claws to the cause with Colossus, Sage, Quentin Quire, Omega Red and Deadpool to protect the current mutant island-nation of Krakoa and all of mutantkind! But that's not all--check out **X-MEN** for ***another*** Laura--one who was trapped in the Vault for centuries and restored to the present day as Talon in **X-MEN #16-19**.

◄ **X-FORCE #41 ON SALE NOW!**



X-MEN #24 ► **ON SALE NOW!**

SNIKT!
Mark & **Drew**
Spring 2023